

A TREMENDOUS WORD

POWER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SINGLE WORD "SELAH."

Dr. Talmage Says "Selah" Is No Scriptural Accident, as Unthinking People Suppose—Through It Roll the Thundering Chariots of the Omnipotent God.

BROOKLYN, May 22.—Rev. Dr. Talmage today took for the subject of his sermon a single word of frequent occurrence in the Bible and whose meaning is but little understood. From it he drew a profoundly impressive description of the varied and majestic purposes of certain parts of Scripture and a practical lesson for Christians generally. The text was Psalms lxi, 4, "Selah."

The majority of Bible readers look upon this word of my text as of no importance. They consider it a superfluous, a mere filling in, a meaningless interjection, a useless refrain, an undefined echo. Selah! But I have to tell you that it is no Scriptural accident. It occurs seventy-four times in the book of Psalms and three times in the book of Habakkuk. You must not charge this perfect book with seventy-seven trivialities. Selah! It is an enthroned word. If, according to an old writer, some words are battles, then this word is a Marathon, a Thermopylae, a Sedan, a Waterloo. It is a word decisive; sometimes for poetic beauty, sometimes for solemnity, sometimes for grandeur and sometimes for eternal import. Through it roll the thundering chariots of the Omnipotent God.

I take this word for my text because I am so often asked what its meaning, or whether it has any meaning at all. It has an ocean of meaning, from which I shall this morning dip up only four or five bucketsful. I will speak to you, so far as I have time, of the Selah of poetic significance, the Selah of intermission, the Selah of emphasis and the Selah of perpetuity.

Are you surprised that I speak of the Selah of poetic significance? Surely the God who supplied the heavens and made the earth a rosebud of beauty, with oceans hanging to it like drops of morning dew, would not make a Bible without rhythm, without redolence, without blank verse. God knew that eventually the Bible would be read by a great majority of young people, for in this world of malaria and casualty an octogenarian is exceptional, and as thirty years is more than the average of human life, the Bible is to be a successful book it must be adapted to the young. Hence the prosody of the Bible—the drama of Job, the pastoral of Ruth, the epic of Judges, the dithyrambic of Habakkuk, the threnody of Jeremiah, the lyric of Solomon's song, the oratorio of the Apocalypse, the idyl, the strophe, and antistrophe and the Selah of the Psalms.

ITS SUGGESTIVENESS. Wherever you find this word Selah it means that you are to pause up to great stanzas, that you are to open your soul to great analogies, that you are to spread the wing of your imagination for great flight. "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder. I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah." "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved. I bear up the pillars of it. Selah." "Who is this king of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory. Selah." "Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah." "Through the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains slinke with the swelling thereof. Selah." "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah." "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah." "I will hide under the covert of thy wings. Selah." "O, God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness. Selah."

Next I come to speak of the Selah of intermission. Gesenius, Tholuck, Hengstenberg and other writers agree in saying that this word Selah means a rest in music; that the Greeks call a disjunctive a pause, a halt in the solemn march of cantillation.

THE SELAH OF INTERMISSION. Every musician knows the importance of it. If you ever saw Jullien, the great musical leader, stand before five thousand singers and players upon instruments, and with one stroke of his baton smite the multitudinous hallelujah into silence, and then, soon after that, with another stroke of his baton raise up the full orchestra to a great outburst of harmony, then you know the mighty effect of a musical pause. It gives more power to what went before; it gives more power to what is to come after. So God thrusts the Selah into his Bible and into our lives, compelling us to stop and think, stop and consider, stop and admire, stop and pray, stop and repent, stop and be sick, stop and die. It is not the great number of times that we read the Bible through that makes us intelligent in the Scriptures. We must pause. What though it take an hour for one verse? What though it take a year for one chapter? We must pause and measure the height, the depth, the length, the breadth, the universe, the eternity of meaning in one verse.

I should like to see some one sail around one little adverb in the Bible, a little adverb of two letters, during one lifetime—the word "so" in the New Testament passage, "God so loved the world." Augustine made a long pause after the verse, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," and it converted him. Matthew Henry made a long pause after the verse, "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise," and it converted him. William Cowper made a long pause after the verse, "Being freely justified by his grace," and it converted him. When God tells us seventy-seven times meditatively to pause in reading two of the books of the Bible, he leaves to our common sense to decide how often we should pause in reading the other sixty-four books of the Bible.

IT GIVES US PAUSE. We must pause and ask for more light. We must pause and weep over our sins. We must pause and absorb the strength of one promise. I sometimes hear people boasting about how many times they have read the Bible through, when they seem to know no more about it than a passenger would know about the state of Pennsylvania who should go through it in a Pullman sleeper, the two characteristics of the journey, velocity and soliloquy. It is not the number of times you go through the Bible, but the number of times the Bible goes through you. Pause; reflect. Selah! So also on the scroll of your life and mind. We go rushing on, in the song of our prosperity, from note of joy to note of joy, and it is a long drawn-out legato, and

we become indifferent and unappreciative when suddenly we come upon a blank in the music. There is nothing between those bars. A pause. God will fill it up with a sickle, or a commercial disaster, or a grave. But, thank God, it is not a breaking down; it is only a pause. It helps us to appreciate the blessings that are gone; it gives us higher appreciation of the blessings that are to come.

The Selah of Habakkuk and David is a dividing line between two anthems. David begins his book with the words, "Blessed is the man," and after seventy-four Selahs, he closes his book with the words, "Praise ye the Lord." So there are mercies behind us. It is good for us that God halts us in our fortunes, and halts us with physical distress, and halts us at the graves of our dead. More than once you and I have been halted by such a Selah. You wring your hands and said: "I can't see any sense in this Providence; I can't see why God gave me that child, if he is so soon going to take it away. Oh, my desolate home. Oh, my broken heart!" You could not understand it. But it was not a Selah of overthrow. It gave you greater appreciation of the blessings that have gone; it will give you greater appreciation of the blessings that will come.

When the Huguenots were being very much persecuted in France, a father and mother were obliged to fly from the country, leaving their child in the possession of a comparative stranger. They did not know whether they would ever return, or, returning, if they would be able to recognize their child, for by that time she might be grown. The mother was almost frozen at the thought of leaving the child, and then, even if coming back again, not being able to know her. Before they left, the father drew his sword and he marked the wrist of that child with a deep cut. It must have been a great exigency to make a father do that.

Years of absence passed on, and after awhile the parents returned and their first anxiety was to find their lost child. They looked up and down the land, examining the wrists of the young people, when, after awhile the father found a maiden with a scar upon her wrist. She knew him not, but he knew her. And oh, the joy of the reunion! So it is now. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." He cutteth, he marketh, and when he comes to claim his own the Lord will know them that are his; know them by the scar of their trouble, know them by the stroke of their desolation.

THE USES OF ADVERTISING. Oh, it is good that the Lord sometimes halts us. David says: "It is good that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Indeed, we must all soon stop. Scientists have improved human longevity, but none of them have proposed to make terrene life perpetual. But the Gospel makes death only a Selah between two beatitudes—between dying triumph on one side of the grave and celestial ascent on the other side of the grave. Going out of this life, to the unprepared, is a great horror.

"Give me more laudandum," said dying Mirabeau; "give me more laudandum, that I may not think of eternity and what is to come." And dying Hobbes said, "I leave my body to the grave and my soul to the great perhaps." It was the discord of an infidel's life breaking down into the jargon of despair; but the Gospel makes the death of the Christian a Selah between redemption and enlightenment. "Almost well," said dying Richard Baxter; "almost well." "Play those notes over again—those notes which have been so great a delight and solace to me," said the dying Christian Mozart. "None but Christ, none but Christ," exclaimed dying Lambert.

Richard Cameron, the Scotch covenantor, went into the battle three times praying: "Lord, spare the green and take the ripe. This is the day I have longed for. This is the day I shall get my crown. Come, let us fight it to the last. Forward!" So you see there is only a short pause, a Selah of intermission, between dying consolations on the one side and overtopping raptures on the other.

My flesh shall slumber in the ground Till the last trumpet's joyful sound; Then burst the chains with sweet surprise, And in my Saviour's image rise.

THE SELAH OF EMPHASIS.

I next speak of the Selah of emphasis. Ewald, the German orientalist and theologian, says that this word means to ascend, and wherever you find it, he says, you must look after the modulation of the voice, and you must put more force into your utterance. It is a Selah of emphasis. Ah! my friends, you and I need to correct our emphasis. We put too much emphasis on this world, and not enough on God and the next world. People think these things around us are so important, the things of the next are not worthy of our consideration. The first need for some of us is to change our emphasis. Look at Wretchedness on a throne. Napoleon, while yet emperor of France, sat down dejected, his hands over his face. A lad came in with a tray of food and said, "Eat, it will do you good." The emperor took up and said, "You are from the country?" The lad replied, "Yes." "Your father has a cottage and a few acres of ground?" "Yes." "There is happiness," said the dejected emperor, "Napoleon never put the emphasis in the right place until he was expiring at St. Helena.

On the other hand, look at Satisfaction amid the worst earthly disadvantage. "I never saw until I was blind," said a Christian man. "I never knew what contentment was while I had my eyesight as I know what contentment is now that I have lost my eyesight." I affirm, though few would credit it, that I would not exchange my present position and circumstances for my circumstances before I lost my eyesight. That man put the emphasis in the right place. We want to put less stress upon this world and more stress upon our God as our everlasting portion.

David had found out the nothingness of this world and the all-sufficiency of God. Notice how he interjects the Selahs. "Trust in the Lord at all times; ye people, refuge for us. Selah." "Blessed be the Lord who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah." "The Lord shall count when he writeth up the people that this man was born there. Selah." Let the world have its honors and its riches and its pomp. Let me have the Lord for my light, my peace, my fortress, my pardon, my hope, my heaven.

What sinners value I resign; Lord! 'tis enough that thou art mine. I shall behold thy blissful face, And stand complete in righteousness.

This world is all an empty show, But the bright world to which I go Hath joys substantial and sincere; When shall I wake and find me there? O glorious hour! O bliss abode! I shall be near and like my God, And sin and sense no more control The endless pleasures of my soul.

But when I speak of the Selah of emphasis I must notice it is a startling, dramatic emphasis. It has in it the bark

the list of the drama. That wakening and arousing emphasis we who preach or instruct need to use more frequently. The sleepiest audiences in the world are religious audiences.

DRAMATIC SCRIPTURE SCENES. You Sabbath school teachers ought to have more of the dramatic element in your instructions. By graphic Scripture scene, by anecdote, by descriptive gesture, by impersonation, urge your classes to right action. We want in all our schools and colleges and prayer meetings, and in all our attempts at reform, and in all our churches, to have less of the style didactic and more of the style dramatic.

Fifty essays about the sorrows of the poor could not affect me as a little drama of accident and suffering. I saw one slippery morning in the streets of Philadelphia. Just ahead of me was a lad, wretched in apparel, his limb amputated at the knee, from the pallor of the boy's cheek the amputation not long before. He had a package of broken food under his arm—food he had begged, I suppose, at the doors. As he passed on over the slippery pavement cautiously and carefully, I studied him until his crutch slipped and he fell. I helped him up as well as I could, gathered up the fragments of the package as well as I could, put them under one arm, and the crutch under the other arm, but when I saw the blood run down his pale cheek I was completely overcome. Fifty essays about the suffering of the poor could not touch one like that little drama of accident and suffering.

Oh, we want in all our different departments of usefulness—and I address hundreds of people who are trying to do good—we want more of the dramatic element and less of the didactic. The tendency in this day is to drone religion, to whine religion, to cant religion, to moan religion, to croak religion, to sepulchralize religion, when we ought to present it in animated and spectacular manner.

Sabbath morning by Sabbath morning I address many theological students who are preparing for the ministry. They come in here from the different institutions. I saw one this morning. If you will go home and look over the history of the church you will find that those men have brought most souls to Christ who have been dramatic. Rowland Hill, dramatic; Thomas Chalmers, dramatic; Thomas Guthrie, dramatic; John Knox, dramatic; Robert McChesney, dramatic; Christmas Evans, dramatic; George Whitefield, dramatic; Robert Hall, dramatic; Robert South, dramatic; Fenelon, dramatic; John Mason, dramatic; Dr. Nett, dramatic. When you get into the ministry, if you attempt to culture that element and try to wield it for God, you will meet with mighty rebuff and caricature, and ecclesiastical council will take your case in charge, and they will try to put you down, but the God who starts you will help you through, and great will be the eternal rewards for the assiduous and the plucky.

GET OUT OF THE RUT. What we want, ministers and laymen, is to get our sermons and our exhortations and our prayers out of the old rut. I see a great deal of discussion in the religious papers about why people do not come to church. They do not come because they are not interested. The old hackneyed religious phrases that come moving down through the centuries will never arrest the masses. What we want today, you in your sphere and I in my sphere, is to freshen up. People do not want in their sermons the same flowery flourishes that the milliners show, but the jargon of the past, but the living reminder caught last August at the edge of Schreiner lake.

We want to drive out the drowsy, and the prosaic, and the tedious, and the humdrum, and introduce the brightness and vivacity, and the holy sarcasm, and the sweet fire, and the epigrammatic power, and the blood red earnestness, and the fire of religious zeal, and I do not know of any way of doing it as well as through the dramatic. Attention! Behold! Hark! Selah!

Next I speak of the Selah of perpetuity. The Targum, which is the Bible in Chaldean, renders this word of my text "forever." Many writers agree in believing and stating that one meaning of this word is "forever." In this very verse from which I take my text Selah means not only poetic significance and intermission and emphasis, but it means eternal re-iteration—forever! God's government forever, God's goodness forever, the gladness of the righteous forever. Of course; you and I have not surveyor's chain with enough links to measure that domain of meaning.

In this world we must build everything on a small scale. A hundred years are a great while. A tower five hundred feet is a great height. A journey of four thousand miles is very long. But eternity! If the archangel has not strength of wing to fly across it, but flutters and drops like a wounded seagull, there is no need of our trying in the small shallow of human thought to voyage across it.

FOR TIME AND ETERNITY.

A skiff, desiring to show his contempt for the passing years, and to show that he could build enduringly, had his own sepulcher made of the finest and the hardest marble, and then he had put on the door the words, "For time and for eternity;" but it so happened that the seed of a tree somehow got into an unseen crevice of the marble. That seed grew and enlarged until it became a tree and split the marble to pieces. There can be no eternalization of anything earthly. But forever! Will you and I live as long as that? We are apt to think of the grave as the terminus. We are apt to think of the hearse as our last vehicle. We are apt to think of seventy or eighty or ninety years, and then a cessation.

Instead of that we find the marble slab of the tomb is only a milestone, marking the first mile and that the great journey is beyond. We have only time enough in this world to put on the sandals and to clasp our girls and to pick up our staff. We take our first step from cradle to grave, and then we open the door and start—great God, whither? The clock strikes the passing away of time, but not the passing away of eternity. Measureless! measureless! This Selah of perpetuity makes earthly inequalities so insignificant, the difference between scotch and needle, between Alexander and but between monarch and cart, between throne and curbstone, between satin and sackcloth, very trivial.

This Selah of perpetuity makes our getting ready so important. For such prolongation of travel what outfit of guide books, of passports and of escort? Are we putting out on a desert, sinuous swept and ghoul haunted, or into regions of sun lighted and spray sprinkled gardens? Will it be Russian or German? Once started in that world, we cannot stop. The current is so swift that once in no way can resist it, no helm can steer out of it, no rudder or titanic arm can buffet it. Hark to the long resounding echo "forever!" Oh, wake up to the interest of your deathless spirit! Strike out for heaven. Rouse ye, men and women for whom Jesus died. Selah! Selah! Forever! Forever!

ODDS AND ENDS.

Physicians head our list of suicides. Never set out all near butter or lard. Longfellow sold books by subscription. India servants get two dollars a month. Good lieutenants do not always make good captains.

Pope, like William III, was fond of landscape gardening. Only the quickening of conscience can hasten repentance. To take out your rat rub repeatedly with spirits of turpentine.

A man says woman is a creature with long hair and short ideas. There are now 65,000 postoffices in the country—the highest number ever reached.

A New York woman at the opera wore a necklace of five and ten dollar gold pieces. Worry is a fruitful source of misery and the prime cause of premature breakdowns. The combined debts of all the nations in the world amount to more than \$90,000,000,000.

A farmer in Dallas county, Ala., makes a delicious wine from the juice of water melons. Coalbrookdale bridge, England, is the first cast iron bridge ever built. It was constructed in 1779.

The family that is anxious to move out of a house finds another family that is just as anxious to move in.

Over \$1,000,000 worth of gold was recently extracted from the soot of the chimney of the royal mint at Berlin.

In 1814 the tomb of a giant was opened at St. Germain who must have been at least thirty feet high during life.

One of the large winter hotels in the Engadine is soon to be heated electrically by power derived from the Nura river.

It is said to be unlucky to move a cat. The small boy who didn't believe in the superstition had his eye scratched out.

Fort Worth, Tex., has the largest flowing well in existence. It is 1,052 feet deep and flows at the rate of 600 gallons per minute.

The Riado bridge, Venice, is said to have been built from designs furnished by Michel Angelo. It is a single marble arch of 852 feet.

Thieves have stolen the book of ordinances of the city of Paso Robles, Cal., and the people there are wondering what they did it for.

Instead of the alloy of zinc and silver which was first chosen for the production of "Arcas plating," one containing cadmium is now preferred.

Strange Features of a Comet.

On Monday morning, April 4, through haze and clouds, I secured a striking photograph of Swift's comet with the Willard lens of the observatory tied on to the 6-inch squarator at the Lick observatory. This photograph reveals a remarkable state of affairs. Spreading out from the head is shown a complicated system of tails. Of these there are three principal ones, the southern of which is the most distinct. These tails are again subdivided into a great number of others, the entire appendage presenting a most unique appearance. At least a dozen distinct branches can be counted on the photograph, some of which present remarkable curvatures. This complicated structure was not visible in the telescope on the preceding morning and gives evidence of rapid changes.

On Monday morning there were two distinct and divergent branches of tail emanating from the head, both clearly visible in the glass. The telescopic view on Tuesday morning exhibited the fact that in less than twenty-four hours a third tail had formed to the extent of about 10,000,000 miles, while the northern tail, which had been very bright the previous morning, had entirely disappeared.

On Wednesday, April 6, still more remarkable phenomena had presented themselves, and portions of the tail were seen to form abrupt angles with their original source.

On April 8, another photograph was obtained with great difficulty in moonlight and dawn. Another violent change had recorded itself. A number of new tails, like fine threads of light, had made their appearance, and a singular and unique phenomenon was present on the southern side of the tail, about 3 degs. from the head. A large projecting mass issued from the tail at a large angle and from this a new tail shot forth parallel with the main one.—Professor Barnard in San Francisco Examiner.

The Fire of a New Purpose.

The great steamer Indiana sailed on Feb. 22 from the port of Philadelphia for Russia, loaded with food for the starving peasantry. All classes, from the millionaire who gave his check for thousands to the poor boy who with his dimes, contributed in this gift.

A teacher in a large Quaker school said, as the steamer left the dock: "My boys were drearily reciting a lesson in algebra one day last week. They were tired and inattentive, they slyly whispered and played tricks upon one another when they thought I was not looking. When the lesson was over I brought out and read to them the account of the horrors of starvation sent home by the American minister."

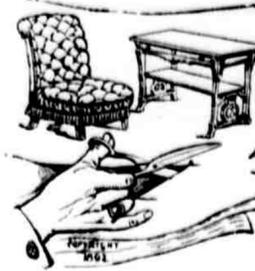
"They listened breathlessly. No more whispering, no more horseplay. When I had finished they at once made themselves into a committee to canvass the school. They were eager, on fire with zeal to do something. It was a curious transformation. A great purpose had made men out of silly boys."

Many of our readers may have been present in a concert or assembly room before the lights are turned on, and have seen the sudden leap of the dingy, dull building and its sludgy audience into brilliancy and warmth and a happy, smiling company, when by the pressure of a knob the electric current entered the room.

Just such a change takes place in every human life when some great purpose comes into it.—Youth's Companion.

Pluralist Directors.

According to the "Directory of Directors," Mr. John William McClure, M. P., for the street and division, still takes the lead among the commoners as the chairman of public companies. He is chairman of no fewer than seventeen companies. Mr. Spencer Balfour, M. P., is a director of fifteen companies. Of these he is chairman or vice chairman of no fewer than thirteen. Sir Charles Lewis' ill health does not prevent his being chairman of thirteen companies. Mr. Knibber is director of eleven companies. The Marquis of Tweeddale is governor of one company, the Commercial Bank of Scotland, vice president of another, the Scottish Widows' Fund and Life Assurance society, trustee of a third, chairman of six others, vice chairman of the Eastern Telegraph company, limited, and a director of eight more companies, making eighteen in all.—London Tit Bits.



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